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ABSTRACT

Male teachers comprise only 12 percent of the teachers in early childhood programs, in comparison to 30 percent of the total teaching workforce. This paper reviews literature on male early childhood teachers and explores the reasons given by four men for deciding to be Montessori early childhood teachers. The paper then considers reasons for the disproportionately low numbers of males in the profession, lack of support for and stereotypes related to males who work with young children, and reasons for entering the field. The paper details interviews conducted with the four male Montessori teachers regarding their reasons for becoming a Montessori teacher, for teaching in early childhood education, and the types of biases they encountered. Reasons cited for entering the teaching profession included dissatisfaction with current jobs, childhood aspirations, and following in a parent's footsteps. The choice of early childhood education was influenced by internship placements in early childhood programs, positive early teaching experiences with young children, and parenthood preparation. The choice of a Montessori school was influenced by attendance in a Montessori school throughout childhood, compatibility with the Montessori philosophy, and a positive impression of other Montessori teachers. Several stereotypes or other concerns were noted, including experiencing sexual harassment, being wary of accusations of child molestation, being the butt of stereotypical jokes, and dealing with double standards. Parents were reported as happy that their child had a male teacher but suspicious if their child talked a lot about the teacher at home. (Contains 20 references.) (KB)

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Male Early Childhood Montessori Teachers:

Why They Chose To Teach

Anthony Santiago

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Abstract

This paper explores the reasons four men have had for deciding to be Montessori teachers in the field of Early Childhood Education. Research of men in Early Childhood Education was reported on and interviews of men in Early Childhood Education were reviewed.

Introduction

When I tell people I am an Early Childhood Educator the usual responses I get are, "That's so cute", and "You have a lot of courage". I wonder how many other people get those responses when they discuss their career. Why is it so cute and so courageous for a man to teach young children? Is it a cute and courageous career choice for women as well? Is caring for young children such a strange activity for men? Why isn't it strange that women would choose this career path? I wonder if other men get that response after they identify themselves as teachers of young children. When I completed my third year of working with young children I wanted to connect with other men to talk about my experiences in the field, and to explain how I came into the world of Early Childhood Education. I also wanted to find out their reasons for entering this female dominated culture and their experiences as members of this culture. I needed to compare my experiences with the experiences of someone else. It took three years for me to want to connect because the first three years I spent focussing on making relationships in the school and getting to learn the culture and practices of the school.

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I chose to focus on Male Montessori teachers because I am a male Montessori teacher and I still wanted to know the experiences of other men in the field. I also wanted to know the reasons these men entered Early Childhood Education, why they chose to teach, why they chose to teach in a Montessori school and what kinds of biases and stereotypes they have faced in their experiences.

The worlds of Montessori education and Early Childhood Education are dominated by women. These are fields where the leaders have expressed a need and a desire to attract and keep men amongst their ranks as teachers of young children. The percentage of men who work in Early Childhood schools and daycare centers is small. These Male teachers make up only twelve percent of teachers in Early Childhood Education and daycare, (Allen, 1997, p. 1, Rodriquez, 1997,p.4). Early Childhood includes between 50,000 to 150,000 male practitioners, (Seifert, 1986, p. 1). Men who have participated in research about male teachers have all given altruistic reasons for becoming teachers of young children.

Despite the altruism of the teachers, and the eagerness of leaders in the field to enlist men in Early Childhood, too few men enter and stay in the profession. The reasons given range from not feeling welcome by the community of teachers, and parents, and society to fears of being negatively affected by biases and stereotypes.

Literature on male teachers in Early Childhood Education

There has been little research done on male teachers in Early Childhood Education (Wolinsky, 1974, p. 1, Robinson & Canaday, 1978 p. 854, Robinson, 1979 p. 279,Shaham, 1991 p. 9). One possible reason is that so few men are in the field, (Shaham, 1991 p. 9). Nationally men constitute thirty percent of the total teaching workforce and

only twelve percent at the elementary level, (Allen, 1997 p. 1, Rodriquez, 1997 p. 4). Early Childhood Education includes between 50,000 to 150,000 male practitioners, (Seifert, 1986 p. 1). In 1984 between one and three million people described themselves as child care providers or Early Childhood educators of some type. Only five percent of those were male, (Seifert, 1986 p. 1, King 1994 p. 3). The American Montessori Society published a survey in its journal, Montessori Life, of the number of male teachers who are employed in schools that are affiliated with AMS. The survey showed that ten percent of the total staff members of four percent of the schools that responded are male. That percentage includes non teaching staff members such as janitors, and other non teaching staff members, (Turner, 1997 p. 20). The survey was sent to 37 out of 750 AMS affiliated schools. 31 out of the 37 schools responded, (Turner, 1997, p. 22). A brief review of current and past membership listings of members of the American Montessori Society showed that out of 11,777 national members, 482 of them identified themselves as men.

Why are the statistics so low for male participation in Early Childhood Education? There are a variety of reasons for the low number of men teaching in the Early Childhood profession. Some men may feel that teaching young children is not a masculine job and think that it is best suited for women, (Freidus, 1992, p. 6, King, 1994, p. 9, Allen, 1997, p. 2, Farquhar, 1997, p. 2,). Other reasons that have been noted include the low salary traditionally paid to early childhood educators, (Robinson, et. al. 1980 p. 34, Seifert, 1986, p. 12, Robinson, 1988, p. 57, Shaham, 1991, p. 119, Rodriquez, 1997, p. 7), and being turned off to working in the field because it is a low status job due to its dominance by women, (Ayers, 1989,p. 135). There were concerns mentioned of being labeled a pedophile, and fear of being accused of sexual abuse of young children,

(Shaham, 1991, p. 138, p. 145, Farquhar, 1997, p. 2). Due to the risk of experiencing false claims of sexual abuse or contact it is harder for men to get jobs as Early Childhood educators, (Robinson, 1988, p. 57, Rodriquez, 1997, p. 7). Others express a concern for having their motives to teach suspected, (King, 1994, p. 11, DeCorse, et. al. 1997, p. 43, Rodriquez, 1997, p. 9).

In a profession that actively seeks ways to recruit men in its ranks why would the men's motives to teach be suspected, and why isn't there strong support for these men in the profession? Seifert, (1974, p. 299), explains, "In theory most people favor increasing their numbers, but in practice many of us do not really welcome particular real men when they actually express an interest in working with young children". One way that men have felt unwelcome in the profession is through their experiences of prejudice as a result of stereotypes harbored by some of their administrators and female colleagues, (Seifert, 1974, p. 299, Skeen, et.al., 1986, p. 727). Those administrators and female teachers who have had experience working with male teachers did not practice prejudice or express stereotypes against their male colleagues. Skeen, et. al., (1986, p. 728) write " Prior experience with a male preschool teacher seems to have the effect of breaking sex-stereotype response sets and providing adults with alternate ways of thinking and behaving". The prejudice experienced by men is widespread and comes in all types of circumstances and from people of all backgrounds, (Seifert , 1974, p. 299). One substitute teacher explained an experience he had with a girl in a classroom he was covering. The girl asked, "You're the teacher ? (*laughter*),You're so silly, only womens are teachers". By the end of the day this girl developed a trusting relationship with the teacher and became

one of his staunchest advocates. Possibly because she was young , she hadn't yet developed sex-role prejudices as well as adults often do, (Seifert,1974, p. 299).

Despite the reasons given for the low numbers of men involved in early childhood education, there is material available that cites the voices of some of the men who are involved in the field in a variety of positions. The available material discusses male teachers who were interviewed or given questionaires to find out their reasons for becoming teachers and entering the field of Early childhood education. The men discussed their personal histories and their experiences in the field, (Robinson & Canaday, 1978, Robinson, 1979, Robinson, 1988, Shaham, 1991, Freidus, 1992, Allen, 1997, Duffy, 1997, Hallenberg, 1997, Rodriquez, 1997 ,Turner, 1997, Uzzell, 1997).

The men who have had their histories in the field and their reasons for taking the role of early childhood educator published come from a variety of backgrounds and gave a variety of reasons for becoming teachers of young children. Many of the men who were cited gave similar reasons the majority of which were altruistic, (Robinson & Canaday, 1978, p. 862, Robinson, 1988, p. 55, Shaham, 1991, p. 13, p. 151, Rodriquez, 1997, p. 7) Examples of these reasons were love and enjoyment of working with children, (Robinson & Canaday, 1978, p. 862, Shaham, 1991, p. 14, Rodriquez, 1997, p. 10, Uzzell, 1997, p. 33), being nurturing, (Robinson & Canaday,1978, p. 863, Shaham, 1991, p. 15), desire to contribute something of value to this age group, (Robinson & Canaday, 1978, p. 862), and a desire to break stereotypes and offer children another way of looking at males, (Robinson & Canaday, 1978, p. 863, Robinson, 1988, p. 57, Shaham, 1991, p. 151). Are such altruistic reasons common? One reason I enjoy working in this field is, I appreciate the opportunity to model for children behavior that is not commonly associated with men

in the mass media. Some of those behaviors are being caring, and conscious of other peoples feelings, being gentle, and using language to solve problems rather than using violent methods. If my reasons for entering and staying in this field are similar to the reasons expressed by the men represented by the research then is it possible that other men have similar reasons for teaching young children?

In the next part of this paper I interviewed three male Montessori teachers and asked them four questions. The questions were, Why did you decide to become a teacher?, Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Education?, Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori school?, and In your experiences what kind of stereo types or biases have you faced as a male teacher? I included my own responses to these questions. My intent was to use their reasons to compare with the reasons other men have given for entering the field of Early Childhood Education.

Interviews

To find out the reasons other men have joined the ranks of Early Childhood Montessori education I interviewed three male Montessori teachers. The four questions I asked were, Why did you decide to become a teacher?, Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Education?, Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori school?, and In your experiences what kind of stereotypes or biases have you faced as a male teacher? The first teacher I chose is a teacher with whom I am working this year in the same classroom. The second teacher I chose to interview is a teacher with whom I have not the pleasure of working , who has worked at the school where I work for three years. The third teacher I interviewed was a teacher who I worked with at the West End Montessori School four years ago who had left to teach at another school called the Washington

Place Montessori School. His name is Jeff. I included my own responses to the four questions.

Harry

Hello. My name is Harry, I've worked at the West End Montessori School for two years now. I'm currently an associate teacher in an all day classroom. I work from eleven a.m. to six thirty p.m, and the children in this classroom are here from eight thirty to six o'clock.

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

I decided to become a teacher for various reasons. I had always been told by my friends that I would be a good teacher. Friends of mine said, "You should be a teacher, you should be a teacher. You'd be great. When I was in high school I used to do babysitting a lot and in high school I worked for a boys and girls club. So, I used to take care of children at their school after school. It's called the after school club which was from two thirty until six. Day care , more or less. I really enjoyed that. I used to be a soccer coach for youth soccer, and I coached basketball too. So, I always loved, more or less, hanging out with kids. But, I usually wasn't in the education setting. I could relate to kids pretty well, and then I didn't study education in college or anything. When I went to work after college I was in computer and legal fields, so I was trying out different jobs I guess and not really very happy with any of them. Basically I decided one day that this was you know, the third long term job in the business world I've had that I wasn't enjoying and that I really needed to make some sort of change. So, I started talking to friends about what I'm going to do and the teacher thing came up again. So I started looking into, um, well I immediately went to look at Montessori schools cause I went to a

Montessori School when I was a kid and I had a lot of fun. So I thought I would look at training programs to be a Montessori teacher. So it was I guess through a lot of discussion with my girlfriend about what you know, what I would like to do. That's what I came up with. As you know, at least there was nothing to lose by giving it a shot to see if I enjoyed being a teacher.

Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Education?

Well. Although I found out now there's actually a Montessori infant toddler program, I decided to start out, it would probably be best to start out with the earliest age group that I could start with. At the same time it was a lot easier to find an Early Childhood training program than to find one ages six to nine and nine to twelve. I think I didn't want to commute a long distance. I didn't want to have to move to do it. I read brochures on training programs in New Jersey and in Washington D.C., and in Ohio, and moving was not an option financially so I uh, it was kind of by default that this, (West End Montessori School Montessori Teacher Education Program), was the training program that I found. But I also at the same time felt like starting at the early ages was probably the best thing to learn first, then if I wanted to move on to the older kids it would be good to have the background in the early kids.

Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori school?

I went to a Montessori school from when I was three till eleven. So I guess I never really studied the philosophy , I mean I did a book report on it in high school or something but I knew that I liked the Montessori method of teaching. I have a tremendous respect for my Montessori teachers that I've had. I still know one of them who was my preprimary teacher and then I was in close contact with my elementary

Montessori teacher until she died several years ago, and just really, really thought ... respected them a lot although I don't remember a whole lot about you know, grade school. I remember being given a lot of freedom to think for myself and to you know, take care of myself. I guess we were given a lot of responsibility and I still am friends with a lot of the kids I went to preschool with, and cause a lot of them continued at my same Montessori school for several years. So I know some of them and they're just a bunch of really great people. They're all really easy to talk to and to get to know. They're all really friendly people that do not discriminate, that have all sorts of friends. One of them is a punk rocker who is friends with all types of people. One of them is in a Princeton PhD program for mathematics. That's such a huge variety of people but everyone is really unique and genuine

In your experiences what kind of stereotypes or biases have you faced as a male teacher?

Well, I'm not sure yet if I've been treated unfairly or negatively in any way for being a male teacher, and I don't have that much experience but the things that I do remember are the first day I came to West End. The first day I walked in the door and all the teachers were there in a meeting and John looked up and said, " Oh hi Harry" and I thought, "How does he know my name? I realized that by looking at the wall there was a list of everyones names and that there were three male names and two of the men were already in the room. That was you know, I certainly wasn't offended at all. It was pretty funny. Then as the year began and I started meeting the parents, you know I had several parents come to me and say, Oh I'm so glad so and so has a male teacher and it's great that you're here, and it will be fun and you'll be a really great role model for him. I

wasn't offended once again. I wondered what this parent thinks I'll be doing differently for them. I think it's good for men to be in classroom. I don't think my teaching method differs necessarily from a woman's teaching method but I think it's good for children to see that men could be teachers and men could be in the classroom and men's roles aren't necessarily daddy goes to the office to work and mom stays at home. You know, I think a lot of kids seeing men behave the way we do as Montessori teachers would be great for them. I don't know what they see in their lives, but I think it would be great. What other stereotypes? I don't know about stereotypes I just hear all the time there's no male teachers. There's no male teachers except for in universities where there are more male professors. The more troubling thing I heard and been also curious about, as a male teacher you have to watch out if people don't think you're a child molester. That's something that obviously needs to be taken very seriously. Child molesting has to be taken very seriously. It's troubling that people say, as a male you have to watch out for it because both sexes would be capable of being a child molester and it was something that I never really thought about. Then I thought, is this something I'm supposed to be worried about now? Am I not supposed to let a kid sit on my lap?, or am I not supposed to give a kid a hug or do I have to be worried about anything ? So, that was the only troubling thing to hear then. But, I'm not concerned about it. I want to learn more about it. I don't know if I've been treated any differently. I wish I could know what's it like being a fly on a wall in the parents room when they talk about our room.

John

Well, I'm John. I came to the West End Montessori School as an intern three years ago. I worked as an intern and did the academic program, (The Montessori Teacher Education Program that is an in house teacher training program in the school), at the same time. Then my first year as an accredited teacher I worked as an associate, (the hours are from eleven A.M. to six thirty P.M.). This is my second year in the same exact position, just in a different classroom.

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

Well, that's a real good question because the job that I had before this was as a service manager in a Harley Davidson dealership. I was just experiencing job dissatisfaction and a friend of mine said to me, " You would make a great Montessori teacher, and I said, " How would you know?", he says, "Trust me". Now, he had gone through Montessori training. He was teaching Montessori at the elementary level at the time he made the statement. He's a close friend, knows me well. He said to me you're not really happy as a service manager. You have nothing to lose. Fill out the job application and check it out. So I did. And when I entered the training program I got offered an internship. And I just followed through.

Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Education?

Well, the training program that I was accepted into was the three to six year olds.

Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori school?

When I was in the fifth grade Mrs. Lauer noticed that there was something different about me, and that I was going through the material quickly without much need for any help. She became concerned that I was going to become a behavior problem

because I was bored. She asked my parents if they had anything at home that I could bring in to keep me busy and my father had me bring in some construction magazines. My father was in the Sea Bees in the navy. It's a construction unit in the navy. I was interested in the pictures and the drawings of how things were built. So he sent me to school with those, and Mrs. Lauer thought my parents were trying to poke fun at her. "There was no way a kid in the fifth grade could understand this stuff". But, when she found out that I did, she decided that maybe she should give me more work. She gave me the rest of the curriculum for the rest of the year, which I finished in several weeks. So, my parents said, "Maybe John belongs in a higher grade where it's more developmentally challenging for him". She said, "We have no mechanism for that", so I was not moved on. I was bored. If you look at my grades from the four months of school in the fifth grade on, there's a steady decline. I know that if it had been a different experience it would have been a totally different outcome. Montessori really addresses the notion that I learned under, that all children learn at the same pace and I remember sharing with a teacher of mine that experience and she said, " Yup. By the end of the third grade everybody's reading. So, what I liked about the Montessori was that it addressed the need for respecting each person for where they're at and it was incumbent upon the teacher to then meet the child wherever it is they're at and move them along.

In your experiences what kind of stereotypes or biases have you faced as a male teacher?

Well, I've experienced some mild forms of sexual harassment. I've been the butt of stereotypical jokes. Some of the stuff is innocuous. Typical male, just wants to sit around and let the women do everything. To stuff that's a little bit more, I don't know, it's not

innocuous anymore. But it's more severe in that , uh, " Well you know, you're a guy in Early Childhood. You can write your own ticket. As if it has nothing to do with my ability. That's what my experiences have been.

What kind of sexual harassment do you mean?

Well I wouldn't be comfortable going into the specifics of it. I think what was most noteworthy was my own reaction. I remember walking out of the building one day thinking to myself, "That's how a woman feels when she's sexually harassed. Wow ! Now I understand ". I remember thinking to myself that this was an opportunity for me to really understand from first hand experience what it was like to be sexually harassed instead of going through my whole life in a privileged class that rarely experiences it. So I decided that I would bring it up at an appropriate time, which I did, and what was most interesting is that the reaction from the administration was the same as what a woman might experience had the administration been male and she'd been the minority. So I really feel that I experienced it from a woman's perspective, from the initial reaction to the shock, to the dismay that administration swept it under the rug with no action.

Jeff

Hi my name is Jeff. This is my fourth year teaching at The Washington Place Montessori school. Before I started at The Washington Place Montessori School I was teaching at The West End Montessori School as an intern for one

Why did you decide to become a teacher?

I really, really enjoyed school as a child. I really enjoyed it a lot. Not always, but overall just a really positive experience. I had a lot of teachers that I can remember watching as a child and thinking, "I really like what they do". They seemed like really

cool people. They seemed like they're having a good time. So, early on it was a handful of things that I thought I might want to do. Like I wanted to be a cop, and I wanted to be a veterinarian. Just all these different things. But I kept coming back to wanting to be a teacher. It just stuck with me more than anything else did. I came to New York after I'd been in graduate school. I thought I would be a high school teacher then. When I got to New York. But I couldn't find a job. So I went into publishing and found out that I hated that. I thought that I'd really love it. I found out that I hated it, and decided that if I was gonna get out of it I needed to figure out what I really wanted to do. Then I thought about teaching again. But I figured if I was gonna do teaching I needed to figure out exactly what and who I wanted to teach. And that's when I took a long hard look at it, and thought I would really give Early Childhood a try.

Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Education?

I taught all sorts of ages. I taught some college level courses. I substitute taught in high school, junior high, elementary schools, volunteered in other kinds of programs and worked with kids of all ages. But the most fun I had in those early experiences was always with the really little kids. It just seemed like they would be the most fun to work with, and it seemed like they would be the most interesting to work with because they were the ones that I knew the least about except that I had a really good time with them. Kind of a funny reason is that I knew I wanted to be a dad eventually and I knew I had a lot to learn about really young kids and I thought teaching this age group would help me with that too.

Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori School?

I didn't have a whole lot of experience in early childhood but I read a little bit about different approaches in survey classes that I had in college. What I read about the Montessori approach, how it was really letting the kids find their own pace, set the classroom up first and let the kids go. That stuff really appealed to me. That was the stuff that initially really sounded great to me.

In your experiences what kinds of stereotypes or biases have you faced as a male teacher?

I'm always, always asked to open up sticky jars. I'm always the one. It's those typical things; "Oh. Will you carry this for me?" I remember one day at a school where I used to work, a school you know very well, a mouse got loose in a classroom, and the teachers came and asked me to catch their mouse for them. I could've been as scared of that mouse as anybody. You know, it's that kind of thing. I've had people that are friends of mine in the profession ask me; "Oh you're a teacher. Well, when are you going to become an administrator?" Well, because that's what guys do. If they're in education they teach for a little while and then they eventually become an administrator or a coach you know. One of the two. God forbid a man might want to stay in the classroom. These are all smart people. These are all great, nice people. It's just people make assumptions sometimes.

Anthony

When I was a child my mother was a teacher in a Head Start program. The elementary school my brothers and I went to was across the street from her school. When school was finished we went to her school so we wouldn't be home alone. My brothers

and I kept ourselves busy by helping the teachers and running errands for the administration. My favorite job was helping my mother in her classroom. I collected supplies and read books to the children, I also told stories. Whenever I was in a room full of children I often volunteered to lead groups of children in games and I told stories. For many years my mother and her colleagues told me I would make a fine teacher. They often warned me that if I chose to be a teacher I would face discrimination, fear and suspicion because I am a man. Those who would discriminate, fear and suspect me would be other teachers, the administration and parents. My mother and her friends insisted that I never let the fear and suspicions of others discourage me from being a teacher if that was a career I wanted to pursue.

Why I Decided To Become A Teacher

When I graduated from high school my mother passed away. I was very close to her and decided that because I was her only son in college I would study to become a teacher. I wanted to fill her shoes and realize her dreams of opening a school for young children that would offer after school and summer school programs for children from preschool through high school. After serving children in a Montessori school for nine years and serving children in sleep away camps for four summer seasons I realized how wonderful it was to work with young children. I stopped wanting to follow in my mother's foot steps. I decided I would teach because I valued serving children and having a positive effect on their lives.

Why I Chose To Teach In Early Childhood Education

My longest and best experiences in any job I held was working with young children. My first experience working with young children was at a sleep away camp as a

group counselor of five to eight year olds. The first week was the most difficult time I have ever had with children. After my first week the administration and staff of the camp gave me a great deal of support and help because they liked the way I worked with the children. Their support and help made my experience wonderful and I felt encouraged to continue. After that first experience I wanted to continue working with young children. In order to receive financial aid for college I had to participate in a work study program. I was told I could find a work study position in a school as a teacher's aide. I found an open teacher's aide position at The West End Montessori School. I went through their interview process and was placed in a classroom as a teachers aide. At the end of the school year I was placed on the substitute teacher list. After four years of working as a substitute teacher I was offered full time teaching positions. I am still employed at the school as a teacher. Although I studied to teach physical education, Early Childhood Education was the first field where I was offered a teaching job.

Why I Chose To Teach in A Montessori School

I chose to work at the Montessori school because I was impressed with the way the teachers spoke to the children and the self monitoring skills the children developed through their experiences in the school. I appreciated the way the teachers valued what their children accomplished in the classroom and how they valued what their children had to say. The teacher's expectations were clear, and because the teacher's trusted their children's abilities the children succeeded in their learning processes. I wanted so badly to learn how to support the growth and development of children. After my first couple of years in the Montessori school I didn't think I could support children by just being a physical educator. I felt that by training to be a Montessori teacher I could better support

children in their learning process. After serving the school as a teacher for three more years I decided to commit myself to being a Montessori trained Early Childhood teacher. I entered the Montessori teacher education program that is offered at the school, and then, I entered a graduate school program in Early Childhood Education at a city university.

Biases or stereotypes I faced as a male teacher

All of the women I have worked with during my nine years of experience in the Montessori school have supported my decision to become a Montessori trained Early Childhood Educator. They also actively encourage me to improve my teaching skills. As positive as the support and encouragement has been, I have had some negative and frustrating experiences facing stereotyped expectations and other biases. During the first couple of years working in the school I realized that in order to function in the school I had to adapt to the expected and accepted behaviors of the women I worked with. My voice was too loud, and too "macho", even if my female co-workers voice was louder than mine, her loud voice was okay, but mine wasn't. The games I played with the children in the gym were too rough and when I hugged a child, my hugs were considered too rough and macho. If my female colleagues were engaged in rough play with the children it was okay or if the teachers gave their students big hugs it was okay. Once I started to hug the children or play roughly, my behavior was regulated, and I had to adapt. To say the least the experience was frustrating. When I complained to a female co-worker she told me, " Welcome to the world of double standards. We deal with it every time we work in a field that is dominated by men, now you're getting it in a women's job. Deal with it." I was irritated by her honesty, but embarrassed because she was right. In a male dominated field there are double standards set in place to control the women who

choose to break the barriers keeping them out. Nevertheless, I didn't appreciate having to adapt my voice or my physical interactions with the children for the comfort or trust of my female colleagues. I also faced many stereotyped expectations of parents and sometimes of teachers. Parents would approach me and say it is good to have some male input because the children need a male role model, and one parent was grateful to see me because he was concerned that with all of the women his son would become a pansy. Now that there is a man, he said he knew his son would be alright.

Fear of sexual abuse and contact often came up as well. Although parents were ecstatic to see me in their child's classroom, if their daughter or son talked a lot about me, or followed me around the classroom often, they often asked in a joking and later in a serious way, what are you doing to and with our son or daughter? In those situations I had a lot of support from the administration, and the parents came in to observe what I did with and to their children.

One teacher I worked with commented she was glad I was in her classroom and immediately put me to work lifting heavy loads while declaring at the same time, that today's woman is capable of doing everything a man can do, and most of them better. When I questioned if lifting boxes was one of those things she said, " Well. That's what you're here for right?" After a few years of bringing the issue up at meetings the rest of the faculty started to do their share of heavy lifting. It wasn't an argument about the inequity of stereotyped expectations that changed their minds. I asked what messages are they sending to the girls if the children only see the male faculty members lifting heavy loads most of the time. Some stereotypes I faced with teachers were fears that because my voice was loud, and deep, I would harm or frighten the children, because I am a man

the children would listen to me better, and I would be a good disciplinarian. Some of these fears and stereotypes were explained to me, some were not explained but I suspected them because of the behaviors of my colleagues. Some children also came in with their own expectations. I don't know if the expectations were based on the children's experiences, or if the children came in expressing their parent's views. If I was playing a game with children they played roughly with me even if I played alongside a female teacher who they played with in a more gentle way. They laughed with the female teacher and growled at me. If a female teacher went to talk to a child about her behavior the child was open to their approach. When I approached a child to discuss his behavior the child often shrank and seemed to be in a defensive mode. Some of the children who shrank confided in me after I earned their trust that they were afraid I was going to yell at them and spank them. Much of my time was spent earning the trust of the female teachers, the parents, and the children.

When I first started my training to be a teacher my goal was to follow my mothers dreams and open and direct a school for young children with an after school and summer school program. Although it was my desire to accomplish my mother's goals, I have developed my own passion to teach in this field. I have developed my own set of goals which are to continue to improve myself as a teacher so I can be best able to support the growth and development of young children.

Review

The purpose of this paper was to find out the reasons four men had for entering the field of Montessori Early Childhood Education. I compared the responses my subjects gave to the four questions with the responses men from previous studies gave for entering

the field to see if there were any similarities in their reasons. I expected to find similarities in the reasons for entering Early Childhood Education between my subjects and the subjects of other studies. I wanted to contend that if men have expressed altruistic reasons for wanting to teach young children then women in the field ought to invite them in the field especially since there is an interest in getting men interested in teaching in Early Childhood Education.

I interviewed three male Montessori Early Childhood teachers and I included my own responses to the four questions. The responses to the four questions varied amongst the subjects.

For question one, why did you decide to become a teacher? Harry said he wasn't happy at his job and his friends suggested he look into teaching. John said he was experiencing job dissatisfaction and a friend told him he would be a good Montessori teacher. Jeff said as a child he wanted to be a teacher. When he realized he was unhappy at his job he looked for another job and decided to look for work as an Early Childhood teacher. My response was when I started studying to teach I wanted to follow in my mother's footsteps to realize her dream of openig a school that offered after school and summer school programs to all the children in a community. After a few years of teaching I developed an interest of my own in Early Childhood Education and decided to teach because I love it.

For question two, Why did you choose to teach in Early Childhood Educaion? Harry said it was by chance that the Montessori Teacher Education Program he was accepted into happened to be in an Early Childhood school. He was also offered an internship position in the school. John said the training program he was accepted into was

a training program for Early Childhood Educators. Jef said the most fun he ever had in his early teaching experiences was with the youngest children. He thought they would be the most fun to work with. Another reason Jeff had for working in early childhood education was he knew he wanted to be a dad one day, and knew the experience of working with young children would be helpful in his training as a future dad. My response was the first job experience I had teaching was working with young children. When I came to the school they offered me a teaching position and I'm still teaching there.

For question three, Why did you choose to teach in a Montessori school?, Harry said, when he was a child from three years to eleven years old he attended a Montessori school. He wanted to teach in a Montessori school to give children the positive experience he had as a Montessori student. John liked how the Montessori method emphasized respecting each person for where they're at in their development. This was a philosophy he liked and wanted to learn. Jeff's response was that what he read about the Montessori philosophy; How teachers let the children find their own pace appealed to him. I was impressed by the way the teachers spoke to the children with respect, and how the teachers expressed confidence in the children's abilities. I felt that by training to be a Montessori teacher I could better support children in their learning process.

Question four was, In your experiences what kind of stereotypes or biases have you faced as a male teacher? Harry said he didn't know if he has been treated unfairly or negatively. Harry commented that the most troubling thing he has heard is as a male teacher you have to be wary about people accusing you of being a child molester. John said he experienced mild forms of sexual harassment. He's been the butt of stereotypical

jokes. John was not comfortable about discussing the specific points of the harassment he experienced. John said he recalls thinking, "That's how a woman feels when she is sexually harassed". He also recalls the disappointment he felt when the "administration swept it under the rug with no action". Jeff said he is always asked to open sticky jars. He is often asked to carry heavy objects. One day Jeff was asked to catch a mouse that had escaped from its cage. Jeff's friends assumed he was involved in Early childhood to become an administrator, a typical stereotyped goal of male teachers. I answered I learned quickly and reluctantly that in order to function in the school I had to compromise with double standard expectations. One double standard expectation was I was told regularly that my voice was too loud or too macho no matter how low I made my voice. Even though my colleagues voices were often louder than mine I had to change my voice regularly. I was called on often to lift heavy objects. The way I moved around the school and classroom was often criticized as being too fast and too macho, even though my colleagues moved around quickly and were often physically rough with the children. The parents were usually happy to see a male on their teaching team. They expressed pleasure to see me but latter expressed suspicion if their child spoke a lot about me at home.

Comparisons

The men who have had their histories in the field and their reasons for taking the role of Early Childhood Educator published come from a variety of backgrounds and gave a variety of reasons for working in Early Childhood Education. The majority of the reasons were altruistic. Some of the reasons given include love and enjoyment of working with children, being nurturing, desire to contribute something of value to this age group,

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